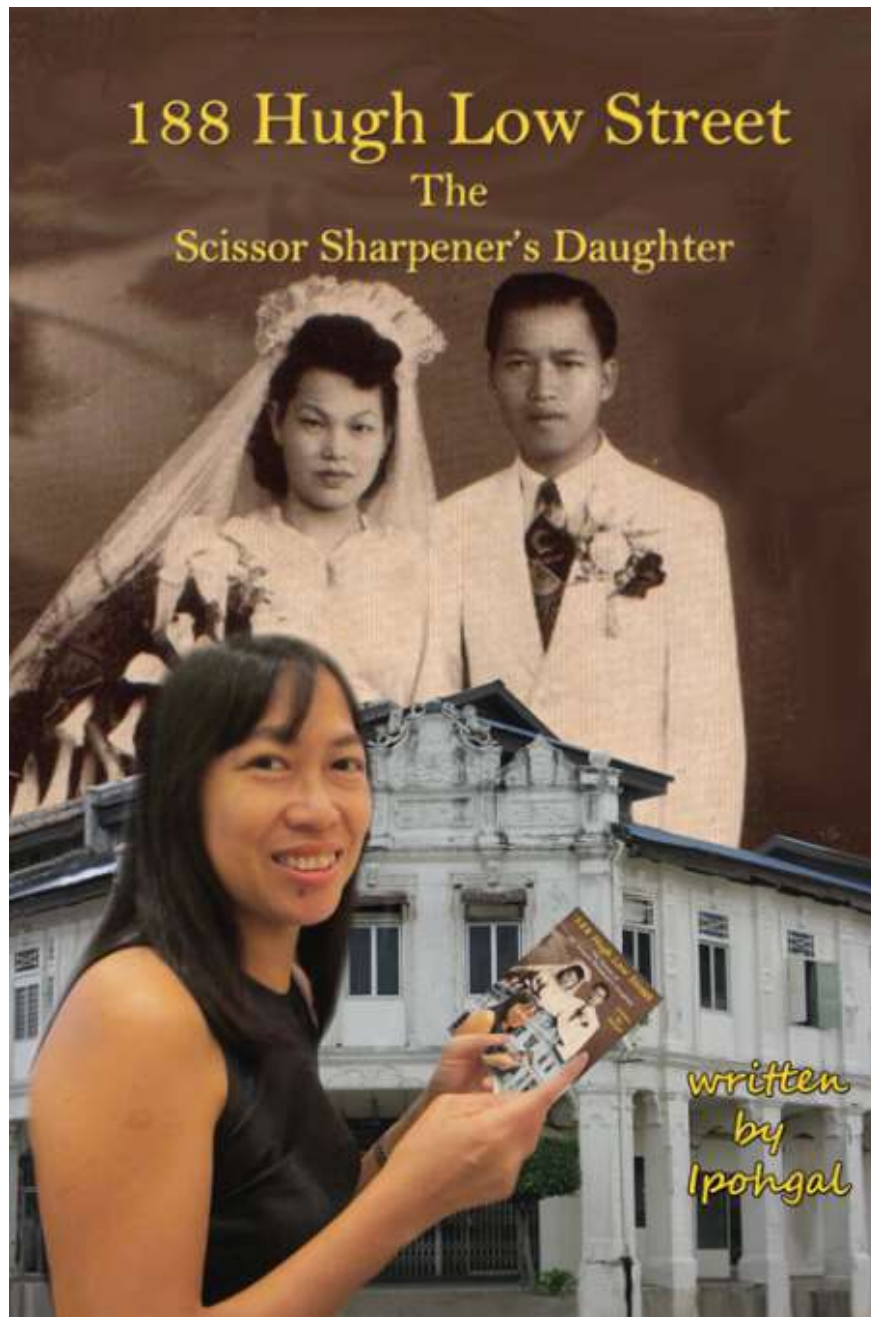


Preview



**“I want to encourage everyone
to pick up a book and read today!**

**It’s my favorite pastime.
What books are you reading today?”**

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my beautiful children, Nicholas and Alexandra, my loving husband, Marcus, and the memory of my beloved parents, without whom my incredibly wonderful life would not be possible.

Special thanks to two very dear family friends, Uncle Kelvin Li and Dr. Anthony Pun for their time, concern, help and encouragement.

I am truly blessed to have the love and support of Mrs. Wong Yew Choong, my former teacher from MGS, Mr. Larry Ng, an old boy of ACS and Mr. Antares Maitreya, a well-known figure in Malaysian literary, music and theatre circles. Together, they have selflessly helped me in editing and proofreading my work.

For this, I am very grateful to them.

And to all the people who have read my blog. Thank you for your visits and valuable feedback.

Without you all, I could not fulfill my purpose in life.

All my love,



Frances Yip (Ipohgal)



**The
Scissor Sharpener's
Daughter**

Frances Yip

Preface

It all started two years ago when Commander Ian Anderson from Ipohworld's World invited me to contribute some stories to *Ipoh, My Home Town*, a book on growing up in Ipoh. I sent in five stories. All were accepted and published. The responses I received from his readers were simply awe-inspiring.

This in turn gave me the idea to compile some of my short stories into a book called *The Scissor Sharpener's Daughter* (previously known as *The Stories of the Scissors Sharpener's Daughter*). The purpose of compiling this book is to give my readers an insight into the lives of a family in the 1960s and 1970s in this tin mining town. It is not the story of a wealthy family but a very humble and resilient one. You can say mine is a story of the voiceless and the faceless in a town known as *City of the Millionaires*.

Compiling this book has turned me from a blogger to a writer. It was a journey of faith and courage. Of course there were trials and tribulations as I went along. Time constraints and financial limitations were always there but I persevered because this is a story that I really want to share and not keep in the closet of my heart.

I relied heavily on memories of my childhood days that somehow stayed so vividly in the deepest recess of my mind despite the passage of time. Before my parents passed on, they always used to reminisce how tough it was for the family and these were some of the stories that I have included too in this book.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful family, friends and relatives for their patience and encouragement. Without their valuable support this book would not have come to fruition. I am glad to see this book, my first endeavor, is finally here before our eyes.

Praise for **Frances Yip**
and
The Scissor Sharpener's Daughter



Mrs. Wong Yew Choong

Bachelor of Science (University of Malaya), Grad Cert. of Education (University of London).

Retired teacher from Methodist Girls' Secondary School, Ipoh.

Ipohgal has written a book which a reader would find difficult to put down once he or she starts reading. She writes with unassuming candour, giving her reader an insight into what life was like for a family like hers. She includes a wealth of information about traditional beliefs and attitudes prevalent in many Chinese families at that time, and even now.

Her keen powers of observation and attention to detail have enabled her to present us with this interesting true-to-life account of a simple girl, growing up in difficult times, yet happy in her family life. From her childhood, to her school-going years, to the inevitable loss of her parents, this book covers a whole range of experience that is amusing, frightening, informative and touching....

A book not to be missed!



Mr. Larry Ng

MA (English), Iowa State University of Science and Technology Ames, IA,
USA.

Former Ipoh ACS boy and Retired Teacher.

This book can be read as a humble yet assertive girl's memoir.

It is a collection of stories told in a refreshingly simple way. And there is disarming honesty here :

“...my parents and I dropped on our beds and snored like pigs.”

Not to mention ghastly events told in a no-holds-barred manner:

“Once singled out, these unlucky people would be taken away for interrogation and their faces would never be seen again.”

As the preface says, the book dwells mainly on how life was for the poor and underprivileged during the 1960s/70s. There was much superstition, but also the smell of blood, sweat, and tears of what the author calls “the voiceless and the faceless” in a city called Ipoh, as they struggled to survive, to find meaning in a society where working people were often lost in a sea of ancient customs and changing societal norms.

As a former Ipoh citizen, I can hear the sounds, see the actions, and feel the emotions of the characters recalled by this particular scissor sharpener's daughter. Through her words, the faceless and the voiceless are finally seen and heard.

A laudable first book by a most promising author.



Mr. Antares Maitreya

Ceremonial Guardian & Tea Master, Magick River

A well-known figure in Malaysian literary, music and theatre circles.

Dear Frances,

I've been meaning to email you after reading your stories from 188 Hugh Low Street, but posting this on your facebook timeline is probably better – since it will also serve as a public endorsement!

You know I love stories (and storytellers) and your writing reminds me so much of my Aunt M.Y.'s <http://inthosedays-gracelee.blogspot.com/>, how could I not enjoy every single chapter? I was touched by your ability to conjure minute details and your frank approach to what some folks might regard as embarrassing subjects. Your language comes across as sincere and unpretentious. What gives your stories their special appeal is that you write from the heart – your compassion and empathy shine through every retrieved memory and makes them come alive in the reader's imagination.

I was particularly touched by your affectionate portraits of your parents - and horrified by your traumatic adolescent encounters with a few psychopaths posing as schoolteachers. As documentation, your book deserves national recognition, as it vividly captures images of an era long gone and pays tribute to the heroic but unsung struggles faced by every migrant community. My heartiest congratulations, *Ipohgal*.

Your ancestors must indeed be glowing with pride and joy!



Dr Anthony Pun
Bachelor of Science (Hons),
Ph. D from University of New South Wales.
OAM, JP National President Chinese
Community Council of Australia & President,
Ipoh ACS Alumni (Australia Chapter).

A humble story from a girl of humble beginnings. As I read the tales about *The Scissor Sharpener's Daughter*, I was surrounded by mixed emotions of sadness, nostalgia and finally, the joy of relief, when the author subsequently overcomes the trials and tribulations in her childhood and teenage years.

These tales are unique as they distill the essence of real life in Ipoh, starting in the early 1940s onwards among ordinary citizens, trying to make ends meet in a small family business. The author was able to capture in a time capsule, the lifestyle and aspirations of a young struggling Chinese immigrant and his family, and his efforts to give the best to his children in Ipoh.

As the tale progresses, the struggle, the patience, the hard work and diligence of this first generation immigrant to Malaysia begins to pay off. It is an example of and an awe-inspiring testimony to a Chinese immigrant who manages to more than survive in his country of adoption. His contributions to his adopted country should not be forgotten, no matter how humble they may be.

Another aspect of these tales deals with the inter-relations among family members. It puts a very human face to experiences and events common to all immigrants. I grew up in Ipoh, hence I can personally identify and empathize with many of the dramas that happen in the Scissor Sharpener's family.

I hope the author will one day join the ranks of famous Asian women writers, and one of them that comes to mind is Han Suyin. The author has initiated a piece of literature with historical accuracy, that truly records in words for posterity, the life and tribulations of a humble Ipoh citizen and his contribution to the development of Ipoh as a town. Not many tales have been told in English about Chinese settlers in Malaysia and this is a tremendous effort.

People of Ipoh, be proud of a talented daughter of Ipoh!



Mr. Ian Anderson
Commander RN (Rtd)
Managing Director of Ipoh World Sdn Bhd

188 Hugh Low Street, is to most people, just another of the city's buildings in need of care and attention, that they pass by without a second glance as they speed towards their destination. Certainly, at first sight, it is no different to several other corner shop houses. They are all in need of repair, with dirty grey walls and broken mail boxes that yearn to be used. Yes, this is Ipoh City minus the glitz of the *The Town that Tin Built*. But, no doubt, if those walls could speak they would recount many tales of the Towkays and their chauffeur-driven Mercedeses, whisking the families off to Whiteaways to buy the latest in imported goods, or Cold Storage for delicacies to tempt the palate. Today, for most of us, these are only faded memories.

But *Ipohgal* remembers vividly the home she grew up in and the tales her parents told her. Therefore, this, her first book *The Scissor Sharpener's Daughter* puts these stories into a compendium of memories that take in, not only family life, but the sights, sounds and smells of Ipoh Town as it was when she was young. In these stories she brings those dirty grey walls back to life and provides a colourful montage of Ipoh, its people and places, with a refreshing style which makes it compulsive reading wherever you come from.

To conclude, I am delighted to write this short piece in support of *188 Hugh Low Street* as *Ipohgal* started her public writing career with us at <http://www.ipohworld.org> as a weekly contributor. Then we featured her in our book *Ipoh, My Home Town* published in 2011 and here today she has risen to be an author in her own right.

Congratulations young lady!



Mr. Gerry Robert

Motivational speaker and author of the international bestseller
The Millionaire Mindset.

“Frances’ book *The Scissor Sharpener’s Daughter* is wonderful. She shares a personal story that will both inspire and instruct the reader.”

**“I want to encourage everyone
to pick up a book and read today!**

**It’s my favorite pastime.
What books are you reading today?”**

Gerry Robert

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**Life is either a daring adventure
or nothing.**

Helen Keller



Long night into day



A bright moonlit night.

Some nights were exceptionally long. Or has the wall clock in the hospital ward run out of batteries? Many a time I wanted to embrace some sleep but it kept eluding me.

How could anyone sleep at all in this kind of place? The air was thick with sickness, death and misery. At every corner I turned to, frail faces were staring blankly at me. This is a place not many people would want to come to and spend hours sitting at the same spot. But here I was, for Mom, from morning till night, day after day.

My mind drifted away to my loved ones at home but I swiftly gathered the distant thoughts again. Someone had just appeared beside me.

"Sorry, I think all the beds will be fully occupied for the next few days. Some new patients were admitted today," the nurse on night duty kindly informed me as she came over to check on Mom's urine bag which was already full and needed to be emptied again.

"Oh, it's alright then, I'll just sit the night out as usual," I replied gratefully.

Nora the nurse whom I got to know well after spending almost seven months at Mom's bedside took a pity on me for having to sit through the night again. The women's ward where Mom stayed was so crowded it hardly had space for me to lay out a straw mattress on the floor beside her bed. Sometimes when there was an empty bed, she would kindly allow me to sleep on it. But I was not always so lucky to be able to lie down to stretch my weary legs and catch

a quick nap. The beds were taken up most of the time.

By 10 o'clock each night, the lights in the ward would be off. It would be total darkness. There was nothing much for me to do when Mom was asleep. She was exhausted from the peritoneal dialysis that she had undergone for a few days. Stories that Mom and Dad once told me during happier times began flooding back and I was overcome by a very profound fear that I would lose them anytime for they were already in their twilight years and were quite ill.

I could hear the soft groaning of an old Indian lady several beds away. She was crying out for her daughter who had not come to see her for the last few days.

To numb myself from this pitiful sight, I reached out for my old diary and pen which I kept in my bag. I made a quick call home to check on my children, making sure they were safely tucked in bed. Looking out from the veranda of the women's ward, I saw a bright full moon silhouetted against a black velvet sky. It was truly a sight to behold and it brought a lump to my throat.

Under the dimmed lights along the quiet and lonely lobby of the hospital ward on the eighth floor, while everyone was asleep, I began to weave my stories.....

**Life is either a daring adventure
or nothing.**

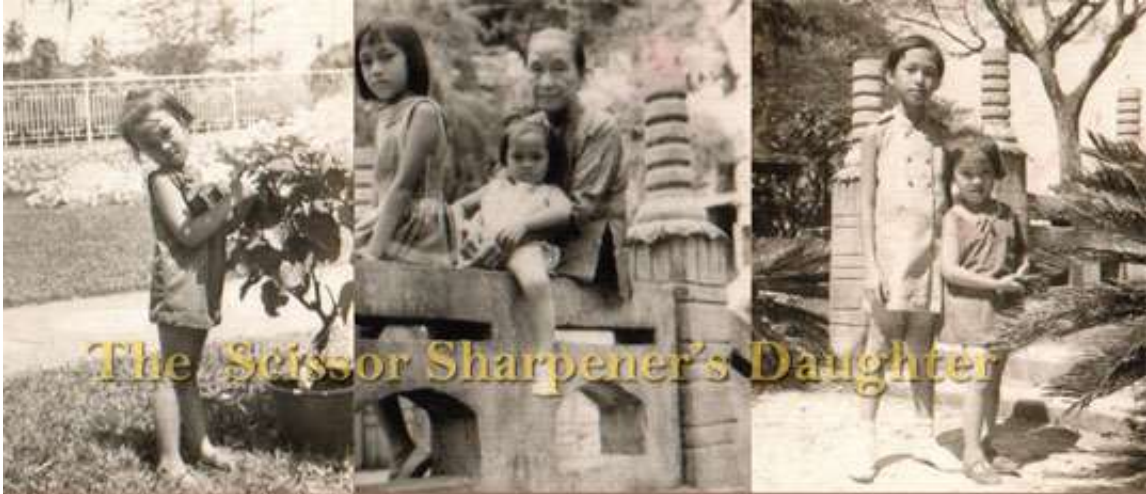
Helen Keller



**Have you got one to read ?
Or gift to friends.....**

**Just RM32.90. You can find out more from my blog site,
<http://188hughlowstreet.wordpress.com/>**





The Scissor Sharpener's Daughter

Those were the days when I was a little bug...



188 Hugh Low Street